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MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NUMBER 71 TOLEDO, OHIO JUNE, 1935

THE GREEN JARDINIERE AUGUSTE RENOIR

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MUSEUM NEWS

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EDITOR: BLAKE-MORE GODWIN, M. A., DIRECTOR, THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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Art is that science whose laws applied to all things made by man make them most pleasing to the senses. *George W. Stevens.*

EDITORIAL

THE Museum is again holding a Hobby Show. This time it is city-wide, instead of restricted, as it was last year. It is under the auspices of the Foremen's Club of Toledo, to whom we tender all credit for its organization.

It contains nearly a thousand items produced by the employees of sixty-five Toledo industries. They range from cast concrete bird baths to precision instruments; from needlework to boat models; from tables and chairs to power saws and lathes; from fish pools to fly-rods.

It may seem that in it we are wandering somewhat from our professed field of art. Perhaps we are. Neither we nor its sponsors claim that it is an art exhibition. It is rather an investigation into and a showing of the productive uses of leisure time on the part of those employed in industry in Toledo.

Our approach is primarily one of interest and hope. We believe in encouraging a more productive occupation of hand and mind than pitching horseshoes or playing pool. We are anxious to see people develop their own interests for the occupation of their leisure time. We also trust that the contact with the Museum will bring about a greater understanding of the use of form and color to the end that all things made by man may be more pleasing to the senses.

A RENOIR RECENTLY ACQUIRED

PERHAPS it is the nostalgia for the 'nineties which we have developed in these hurried and confused times that makes the paintings of the Impressionists so attractive to the present generation. At any rate a room of their pictures is as refreshing as the first stirring breeze at the end of a sultry day. There is in them a vibrancy and life that is ever fresh and joyous.

Most representative of the Impressionist painters is Pierre Auguste Renoir. Manet, who had said that the principal subject of a picture was light, was the leader of the school; Monet, who had first discovered the principles of broken color, had developed the technique upon which it was founded; Degas, who had studied with Ingres, had united his faultless draughtmanship with its luminous color. Renoir combined the outstanding characteristics of each in a superlative and individual manner which makes the mass of his work epitomize Impressionism. That he was not as great an innovator as the leader of the school may perhaps have been due to the accident of birth, for he was nine years Manet's junior, and the discoveries of the slightly elder painter were of so far-reaching a nature that they provided a basis for the work of more than one generation of artists.

Renoir was born at Limoges on February 25, 1841. When he was still very young his father, a tailor, lured by the prospect of greater earnings, moved to Paris. The prospect turned out to be an illusion, and at the age of thirteen Renoir went to work as a painter in a porcelain factory, with the rosy future that by skill and perseverance he might eventually be employed in the Sevres plant. Within five years a machine had been invented to do the work cheaper, and the young decorator of vases was replaced, along with many of his fellows, by a mechanical contraption, to the lasting benefit of both industry and art. He then turned his hand to the painting of window blinds for a few years, and his proficiency thereat enabled him to save enough to enter the school of Gleyre. There he met Sisley and Monet, with whom he left the classes after a short period.

Thenceforward he was largely self-taught. For a time he was influenced to a degree by Courbet. Later in life, while discussing that master and the "power" which, in the popular mind, was the chief characteristic of his painting, he said, "As far as I am concerned, I had rather have a penny plate done in three pretty colors than miles of your 'powerful'—and tedious—painting!"[1]

His first offering to the Salon, in 1863, was accepted, and when the Salon had closed he destroyed the picture, as he did all of his earliest works, for it, like them, was a romantic concept in the style popularized by Delacroix, and was painted with bitumen. This pigment, very popular at the time, Renoir learned would make for impermanence in his pictures, and besides he had taken to heart the criticism of Diaz that he was using too much black in his paintings.

It was in this year that Manet and others of the Impressionists had had their works rejected by the jury and the Emperor Napoleon III had ordered the Salon des Refusés. About this time Renoir allied himself with that group, and for the next years shared their vicissitudes. In the Franco-Prussian War his regiment fortunately spent most of the time in Bordeaux. At its close he returned to Paris and went on with his painting. His offerings to the Salon were regularly rejected for the next eight years, and he exhibited with the Impressionists. During this period he executed a considerable number of portraits. In 1873 he went to Argenteuil, where he painted with Monet, and met Caillebotte, the first collector to become a patron of the new school, and whose collection, although accepted by the French Government as a bequest in 1895 with the greatest reluctance, is now one of the glories of the Louvre.[2]

In 1880 Renoir visited Italy. He went first to Venice, where he painted several pictures and discovered the brilliant color of Carpaccio. In Florence, Rome and Naples he spent his time in the museums. Strange as it may seem, it was in Raphael and in the art of Pompeii and the Egyptians that he found his chief joy. Previous to his Italian trip he had developed a broad, delightful and individual style of painting, and had produced some of the works which will always remain among his greatest.

On his return to Paris he entered an art school and set for himself the task of mastering line and composition and improving his drawing. From these years of strict discipline also came works which, while they represent a very considerable change in his technique and style, are counted among his masterpieces.

It is to resolution such as that manifested by his resumption of technical studies that much of his achievement is due. Until this time, although he had proceeded most cautiously in the use of Impressionistic formulas, his art had seemed but a variant of that general theme. Interested in the play of light, as were the other members of the group, he had concentrated upon its effect upon the figure, had eliminated dull color from his palette, and had used pure broken color. From the time of his Italian trip he freed himself

from the limitations of luminism which might have hampered a lesser artist, and when the so-called tight manner which he had developed as a result of his studies had added all that it could to his equipment he progressed still further by building upon his previous accomplishments. In the two remaining decades of the century he produced further masterpieces, some of which anticipate if indeed they do not surpass the work of the Post-Impressionists.

Soon after 1890 he established himself in southern France to gain relief from the rheumatic attacks which had first come upon him ten years earlier. There he remained most of the time until his death in 1919. He continued to paint all of the time, and after the beginning of the twentieth century produced those many paintings in which the reds predominate. In his work on the nude in this last period he also had a predilection for very heavy forms.

Renoir, like all the artists of his school, was slow in receiving public approval. It was only after 1883 that he surmounted serious financial difficulties. Fortunately, however, he had a long life, and so lived to see his works receive general acclaim and official honor. In 1900 he was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor and twice later advanced within that order. Today he is universally acknowledged as one of the great masters, not only of his time, but of all times. Mather writes "there is no master of the century who so fully embodies all that was greatest in eighteenth century France and earlier in Rubens."[3] Wilenski speaks of him as "the great artist of the Impressionist group, and one of the greatest masters of the whole French school, if not, indeed, of European painting."[4] Other scholars and critics pay him almost equally high tribute.

Renoir was a prodigious worker and a prolific painter. Throughout his life he was constantly at the easel, and so he has left a vast number of sketches and pictures. They are not all of equal merit, but few are bad, many are good, and a surprising number are truly great. Though we think of him primarily as a painter of the figure, clothed and nude, he has also produced gems of beauty in landscape, seascape and still life. His artistic life was one of continuous development, for he knew no cessation of effort. He was never content to repeat a pleasing formula. He united the clarity of porcelain with the delicacy of pastel. He treated sculptured form with a marvelous luminosity. He did not allow momentary effects of light to distract him from the more monumental concepts.

Renoir had this in common also with the other members of his school, that his works received a more ready appreciation abroad than at home, and hence many of his greatest paintings are found

outside of France, in Moscow, Oslo, London, Berlin, and particularly in America. Yet so productive was he of pictures of real greatness, that with the tremendous expatriation of them which occurred, there are today in the Louvre so many of such supreme quality that they would form a most notable collection for any museum. Our own country is particularly rich in his works. The Barnes Foundation alone possesses perhaps two hundred of his canvases, and a very large number of his paintings are to be found in the museums and private collections of the country.

The Toledo Museum acquired in 1933 as the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey a splendid example of Renoir's work. It combines painting of the figure and still-life, and also is, in a sense, a portrait. It formerly bore the descriptive title, "A young lady seated in front of a piano with a green vase of flowers," for which we have substituted the more serviceable one, "The Green Jardiniere." It is said to have been painted in 1882 and finished later.[5] It was done therefore after his Italian trip, and we would be inclined to think that finishing touches could not have been applied many years later. It incorporates the artist's most sterling qualities. It has a magnificent freedom and dash of brushwork and a fine clarity and brilliance of color. The fleshtones are particularly attractive. Renoir always sought models whose skins took the light well, and the face, shoulders and arms of the girl in our picture are superlative evidence of that quality.

Another version of this picture exists, into which the Renoir family cat has also been introduced.[6] Meier-Graefe has written a most interesting story of his authentication of it—after the painter himself had condemned it as false because it had been stolen.[7] Madame Renoir and the maid, however, so loved the cat that they could not restrain their enthusiasm, and Renoir at length acknowledged and signed it. Madame Renoir even recalled the green jardiniere, which had been given her as a christening present upon the birth of her first child, and from that the date when she had posed for it. It, and our own picture, therefore are studies of the painter's wife, which adds to them another note of interest.

[1] Vollard, Renoir: An Intimate Record. (Trans. by Van Doren and Weaver), p. 46.
[2] Wilenski, French Painting, p. 243, note.
[3] Mather, Modern Painting, p. 224.
[4] Wilenski, French Painting, p. 265.
[5] Meier-Graefe, Renoir, p. 182. Illus.
[6] In the collection of Mr. Harris Whittemore, Jr., Boston.
[7] International Studio, March, 1931.

THE WHITE BALLET — GERTRUDE SCHWEITZER

AN AMERICAN PAINTING

THE White Ballet by Gertrude Schweitzer was acquired by the Toledo Museum from its Twenty-first Annual Exhibition of American Paintings held last year. It represents a young girl in a shimmering and translucent white ballet costume seated upon a slightly less white couch. Couch and girl occupy nearly all of the picture, but in the distant background in the upper right-hand corner two dancers in vigorous motion have been sketched. The green of a goblet in the foreground forms an interesting color note and contrast to the pink of the scarf thrown over the arm of the couch.

The artist has wielded a most facile brush, producing a splendid contrast between the solidity of flesh and couch and the translucency of glass and costume. The textures, though close in value, are well differentiated. Although the first impression is of nearly pure white, much color in close gradations has been used to temper the white and produce the modelling of form, costume and couch. The treatment is so simple and direct that it gives the impression that the picture was done with great ease. It is so sure that it asserts the mastery of technique which the artist has achieved.

Mrs. Schweitzer is a young artist. Last year she was described in a New York review as an "unknown artist who has been obviously willing to submit to self-imposed discipline long enough to achieve soundness of craftsmanship before showing her work to the public." Her first work was in watercolor, and it was less than two years before painting the White Ballet that she seriously essayed oils. Her thorough grounding in the former medium shows its influence in her fluid and delicate handling of the latter.

She studied at Pratt Institute and at the National Academy in New York and at the Julien Academy in Paris. In 1933 she received the Margaret Cooper Prize for oil painting at the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors Exhibition and the American Water Color Society Medal.

Her painting acquired by the Toledo Museum had previously been exhibited in the New York Municipal Exhibition and at the annual showing of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors.

OUR SUMMER EXHIBITION

AS HAS been our custom for many years, our temporary exhibition galleries will be devoted during June, July and August to showing a selected group of contemporary American paintings. All of the pictures included have been personally chosen by President William A. Gosline, Jr., from the great annual exhibitions, the artists' studios and the dealers' galleries.

The Museum holds this exhibition each year with the two-fold purpose of giving to Toledo people the opportunity to see the best work of our American artists and of giving to the artists the opportunity of bringing their work to the attention of a broad and cultured public.

The profession of artist long ago secured a place of dignity on this continent. The sign painter who on occasion turned his hand to portraiture of a century ago has given place to the well-trained and competent artist. The very mass of art production alone today commands our attention and respect. From this mass come many things of great artistic merit. A few of the best of these we hope to show each year.

In the current exhibition are included over sixty paintings by almost as many artists. Such a group brings to Toledo as fine, though not as extensive, an exhibition as it would be possible to see anywhere. It is well worthy of the careful study of all who are interested in art.

TAIKWAN'S BAMBOO GROVE IN MOONLIGHT

THE painting, Bamboo Grove in Moonlight, which hangs in Gallery 6, is the work of the Japanese painter, Hidemaro Yokoyama, who is generally known by his painting name, Taikwan, or by the name Yokoyama-Taikwan. He is known as the premier artist of the native style of painting in present-day Japan. The sympathetic, sensitive feeling which the painting expresses, the sense of sureness and power behind its delicate brushwork, and its impressionistic spirituality and poetic quality have all been characteristics of the work of Japan's great artists in this black and white medium since the fifteenth century.

In the simplicity of such a painting as this lies much of its charm and perhaps the major reason for its greatness. Only a master-painter, in full and mature control of the technique and of his materials, imaginative, yet sure of his conceptions, could produce such a masterpiece. The medium is ink and water. The material is fine silk, the successful use of which demands consummate control and quickness of action from beginning to end. The least error is ineradicable.

The quality and range of tone which may be secured by a skillful artist with a tablet of ink and a little water is remarkable. In the Bamboo Grove in Moonlight there is a deep rich black which, strangely enough, appears to become enriched by distance, and there are varying intermediate values, ending in an ephemeral gray which actually loses itself in the pure white of the lower foreground.

The very quickness with which such work must be executed ensures a directness of expression which in other techniques is by no means inevitable—certainly not in oil paint upon canvas, which may be reworked almost limitlessly.

Sometimes Japanese artists working with ink on sized silk first sketch in the essentials of the composition with light charcoal lines, remaining traces of which may later be brushed away with a soft feather; but sometimes the painting is done directly on the silk without the guiding lines. The ink, which comes in oblong tablets, is vigorously rubbed with water upon an inkstone, producing a perfect blend of ink and water. When delicate tones are desired clear water is added. Soft brushes of rabbit's hair are used. The artist paints quickly and surely with free, relaxed movements which permit the spirit of the artist's vision to be transformed to enduring form with unerring and spontaneous touch.

Bamboo as a subject is one not often treated by Occidental artists but one which the Oriental loves to paint. Probably no other

BAMBOO GROVE IN MOONLIGHT YOKOYAMA-TAIKWAN

one subject challenges the Japanese artist's feeling for the spirit of art as does the bamboo, with its light and shade, its peculiar and intriguing manner of growth, and its suppleness. In this picture Taikwan has expressed pictorially the very spirit of the bamboo.

In the lower right-hand corner of the painting appear the signature, Taikwan (in two characters), and an impression in vermilion from his personal seal. The custom of using both signature and seal is a universal one among Japanese artists.

Yokoyama-Taikwan was born in 1870. In 1893 he graduated from the Tokyo Art School, and was made a professor in that school in 1897. He was the follower of the great teacher, connoisseur and critic, Okakura-Kakuzo, and when the latter resigned the Directorship of the Tokyo Art School and founded the Nihon Bijutsu-in in protest against the discarding of national painting traditions and the taking over of western methods, Taikwan became one of the charter members of the new organization and today he is the most influential artist in this movement. Travel in India, Europe and America during the years from 1904 to 1906 further enriched Taikwan's experience. But for all his admiration for Occidental art and his appreciation of the fine painting technique of the artists of Europe and America he has preserved the national traditions of Japanese art in his own paintings and has diligently encouraged the same adherence on the part of his colleagues and pupils. Taikwan's real attitude toward painting in general, and particularly the native Japanese style, is beautifully and adequately expressed in his own words in a recently published article.[1]

His Bamboo Grove in Moonlight was painted in October, 1931, for our Exhibition of Modern Japanese Paintings, which was known officially in Japan as The Toledo Nippon Gwa Tenrankai and which was originated and planned by the Toledo Museum of Art in co-operation with the Japanese Government. Six of the paintings from this special exhibition were retained in Toledo. From the one hundred and nineteen paintings in the exhibition the Museum selected for its permanent collection this beautiful example, which not only represents Taikwan's recent work but is a typical example of his style. Taikwan also paints in full color, but he prefers the black and white medium, of which this Bamboo Grove in Moonlight is one of his most charming and subtle masterpieces. Its masterly execution and its powerful spiritual and emotional appeal make it an important acquisition. It enriches the collections of the Museum, offering to visitors another source for keen enjoyment.

[1] "The Education of Artists", Contemporary Japan, March 1935, pp. 606-610.

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MUSEUM HOURS

The Museum is open daily from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and on Sundays and Holidays from 1 to 5 P.M.

Admission to the Museum and its regular educational activities is free at all times.

There is no charge for tuition in its School of Design.

MEMBERSHIP

Anyone interested may become an Annual Member of the Museum by paying Ten Dollars a year, thereby securing all privileges of the Museum and contributing to the support of much of the free educational work for all of the children of Toledo.

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

I DESIRE to become a member of The Toledo Museum of Art, paying ten dollars ($10) a year for full privileges for myself and members of my immediate family.

I hereby constitute Blake-More Godwin, Director of the Museum, my attorney in fact in my name and stead, to subscribe my name to the Articles of Incorporation.

Name .....

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